

Epiphany 2A 2023

When two of John's disciples, Andrew and an unnamed man, approach Jesus, he asks them, "What are you looking for?"

That is the central question for us all.

What are we looking for?

Notice that John's disciples do not answer with specifics.

They do not give Jesus a list or tell him even one concrete thing that they are seeking.

They simply call him teacher, and ask where he is staying.

They are looking for a relationship with Jesus, one in which they learn from him.

The reality is that specific answers are not often clear to us.

The disciples are headed where Jesus is headed, but they have no idea where that will lead them.

Later, Jesus says to his disciples: "you know the way to the place where I am going," but they do not understand.

Notice that he does not say, "You know where I am going."

Thomas, speaking for all of them, I suspect, responds, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

They are being too literal.

Again.

The spiritual journey is not like a physical journey.

It is about the process, not the destination, about relationships, not individual achievement.

Jesus explains, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

In other words, Jesus is saying, “Being in relationship with me is the way. Be in process as I am in process. The journey is the destination.”

At the point when Andrew and the other disciple of John approach Jesus, they sense that they have somewhere to go and that Jesus will lead them there.

Teacher, where are you staying?

It is important that we not be stymied on our journeys because we do not know the point of arrival.

John, who had been hoping for the appearance of the messiah, did not know who it would be.

In fact, he did not recognize that Jesus was the anointed one even though they grew up together.

Not knowing the destination did not prevent John from doing what he felt called to do.

He baptized.

He hoped.

He waited and watched.

It was not until he had baptized Jesus that John realized who Jesus was.

God had said to John, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”

Once John saw this, he began to testify that Jesus was the son of God, the one for whom people had been waiting.

It is in retrospect that we understand why God leads us to specific places, to specific actions.

It was only after the fact that John realized *why* God had led him to baptize.

“I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water *for this reason*, that he might be revealed to Israel.”

Baptizing had a purpose that John could not have imagined—to reveal the messiah to Israel.

We do not know what God will do today, but it might be very different from what God did yesterday.

As for tomorrow, God only knows.

Beware of those who claim to know what God will do tomorrow.

They fool themselves.

Spiritual wisdom is about process, not answers.

We engage in the process led by God and, in retrospect, may be privileged to see why.

John knew to baptize.

Andrew and his companion knew to seek John, and that led them to discover Jesus.

They did not know exactly where they were going, but they followed God's lead.

When they looked back, they saw that everything had led to the proclamation of Jesus as the messiah and had drawn them into supporting his mission.

Knowing everything is not the goal of a spiritual life.

Being open to God is.

Relating to God is.

It was important that John not know prior to the baptism.

Until that point, Jesus was not ready to begin his ministry, to be recognized as the messiah.

Had this not been the case, God would have spoken to John earlier.

God does not play hide and seek or try to fool us.

God will lead clearly when we need to be led.

This is why the Episcopal Church emphasizes prayer, not dogma, relationship, not rules, process, not answers.

Spirituality is more of a heart journey than a head journey.

Teacher, where are you staying?

In my own spiritual journey, the questions have been more important than answers.

It was questions that led me to the Episcopal Church, more questions that led me to
become ordained.

I never knew where it was leading.

The questions guide us.

They open us to new ways of being, of doing things.

They stimulate growth.

Answers are not inherently bad, but they just sit there until they are needed, useless until
the time calls for them.

Having all the answers in advance is like carrying all of one's tools with one
everywhere.

They just load one down so that one cannot get anything done.

God leads us to the tools we need when we need them.

We get answers when necessary if we remain in relationship, open to God's leadership.

The spiritual path is a day-by-day trusting in God, who will give us what we need to
know when we need it.

This does not mean that we do not seek.

The disciples of John followed first John and then Jesus because they felt that these men could help them find what they needed.

Seeking makes us open to the answers when they are provided.

Just as the Corinthians, whom Paul praises for waiting for the revealing of Christ, we wait for what we need when we need it.

In the meantime, we remain open to growth, open to ideas, open to relationship.

The questions help us to know where we need to be.

They help us to follow God.

Teacher, where are you staying?